

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. GILLIBRAND). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the time for the cloture vote, now set for 10:30 a.m., be extended until 11 o'clock this morning.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, for the knowledge of all Members, we are very close to being able to work out an agreement on the finalizing of the Interior appropriations bill. There are some language problems the staff is working on now. But we should have a series of amendments—it could be as many as seven, eight amendments—and we will try to do those in a block of time. We have 23 members who are trying to work out something in the Finance Committee as it relates to health care, so we would like to have those votes in a block of time sometime this afternoon. But we should be able to have a consent agreement that will be approved by Senator McConnell and me in the near future.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, the time between now and 11 o'clock, I ask unanimous consent that be time for morning business, with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOND. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BOND. Madam President, are we in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes, we are.

AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN STRATEGY

Mr. BOND. Madam President, I rise today to call for the testimony before Congress of our top military commanders in Afghanistan, GEN Stanley McChrystal and General Petraeus. Congress and the American people need to hear directly and as soon as possible from the generals to ensure that political motivations in Washington do not override the vital needs of our commanders and our troops on the ground.

Ordinarily, I don't like the idea of calling generals away from their duties in theater but, unfortunately, in the often surreal world of Washington politics, all the hard work by our military and intelligence professionals on the battlefield in Afghanistan can be undone very quickly. Unfortunately, the latest verbal wavering by the administration and some of my colleagues in Congress can do just that.

Last November, when I sent my report, the Roadmap to Success in South Asia, to then President-elect Obama and his national security team, I outlined the importance of messaging to our overall success in Afghanistan and Pakistan. For too long, the United States has flailed about with an uncoordinated communication plan. In other words, we have been off message.

Unfortunately, the enemy has continued to hone its own message. Radical Islamic terrorists have staged suicide attacks for maximum publicity, propagandizing their message on the Internet, and convinced their fellow terrorists-at-arms that they will defeat the international community.

Negative and indecisive comments by the President, broadcast worldwide, have now given the enemy a big win in the public information battle.

On CNN, the President questioned: "Are we pursuing the right strategy?"

On NBC's "Meet the Press," the President's words were even more disturbing, signaling a lack of confidence in his earlier strategy. The President said:

If an expanded counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan contributes to the goal of defeating al-Qaida, then we will move forward. But, if it doesn't, then I'm not interested in just being in Afghanistan for the sake of being in Afghanistan or saving face or . . . sending a message that America is here for the duration.

Comments such as these call into doubt America's commitment to Afghanistan. They give hope to the terrorists—hope that America's resolve is not real, and that they only need to wait us out to win the war.

The people of Afghanistan get the message that we are leaving soon. The implied message is that you better work with the Taliban and al-Qaida, because they will be here after America leaves. This is a public bonanza in diplomacy for our terrorist enemies.

At the same time, these comments have done a great disservice to our men and women serving in harm's way. These heroes need our country's un-

wavering support, not vacillation because of political pressures.

President Obama's recent comments present a stark and dangerous contrast to his earlier resolve—resolve that I applauded on this floor and publicly and proudly supported. When President Obama commissioned General McChrystal's assessment of the situation in Afghanistan, I believed that he was genuinely interested in receiving the general's expert, on-the-ground perspective and his informed opinion of what strategic and tactical changes would be required for success.

Unfortunately, it now appears that the President has developed a sudden case of buyer's remorse. It seems increasingly clear to me the Obama administration is inclined to reject the counterinsurgency strategy recently recommended by General McChrystal and endorsed by the head of the U.S. Central Command, GEN David Petraeus and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ADM Mike Mullen. In a bewildering twist, this is the same counterinsurgency strategy the President himself endorsed this past March.

I have been a strong and vocal supporter of the administration's new strategy in Afghanistan, so I was particularly disappointed by the President's suggestion this past Sunday that he is reconsidering the American commitment to the war in Afghanistan.

I am also deeply disturbed by press reports that Defense Secretary Gates will delay sending General McChrystal's troop request to the White House because the White House is not ready to receive it. Given the President's resolve this spring, I am somewhat puzzled by the strange treatment of General McChrystal's assessment and troop request. Unnecessary delay is not our friend in this war.

The clearest reason for this delay seems to be that the President is considering not granting General McChrystal's request. Instead, we are now hearing that he may push for a more aggressive covert war against al-Qaida leadership in Pakistan.

We all want to eliminate the al-Qaida leadership that plotted and planned the attacks that claimed more than 3,000 American lives on September 11. And depending on the details, more aggressive action in Pakistan may be a good thing. But such action should be in addition to, not a substitute for, giving our troops in Afghanistan all the resources and supporting personnel they need to succeed.

While denying al-Qaida and Taliban militants sanctuary in the border regions of Pakistan is critical, a counterterrorism-only approach, focusing on one part of this regional conflict, will ultimately hand victory to the world's most violent and feared terrorists. This type of counterterrorism-only approach failed us in Iraq and it has failed us in Afghanistan for the last 7 years.

I have consistently called for—and President Obama had promised—a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy designed to meet a set of clearly defined goals for the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. The Obama administration has rightly characterized the problem as involving both of these two countries. But right now, we have a plan only for one country.

I am not suggesting it is General McChrystal's job to set that wider. As directed by the President and by our NATO allies whom he represents as commander of ISAF, the general has laid out a good strategy for success in Afghanistan and that strategy includes a request for more boots on the ground. I understand there is a lot of hand-wringing in Washington right now over Afghanistan. We saw the same reaction over sending more troops into Iraq 2 years ago. The political courage shown by the White House and Congress back then proved to be successful. Today, we must marshal the same courage and give General McChrystal what he needs to get the job done.

Amid the reports of wavering and hand-wringing, an important question comes into mind: What has changed? During the campaign and after his inauguration, the President spoke repeatedly about the importance of winning the war in Afghanistan.

For example, on March 27, 2009, when he rolled out his comprehensive new strategy for Pakistan and Afghanistan, the President declared that:

To succeed, we and our friends and allies must reverse the Taliban's games and promote a more capable and accountable Afghan government. Our troops have fought bravely against a ruthless enemy. Our civilians have made great sacrifices. Our allies have borne a heavy burden. Afghans have suffered and sacrificed for their future. But for six years, Afghanistan has been denied the resources that it demands because of the war in Iraq. Now, we must make a commitment that can accomplish our goals.

I was heartened by these words. I agreed with the President on the need for a fully resourced counterinsurgency campaign and a solid commitment to ensure the security of the Afghan people and our own vital interests. I applauded his recognition of winning this war when he told our veterans, the VFW, this past August:

Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will be an even larger safe haven from which al-Qaida would plot to kill more Americans. So this is not only a war worth fighting; this is fundamental to the defense of our people.

But our troops in the field have now been waiting over 6 months for the President to follow through on his promises. As General McChrystal's recently leaked assessment points out, time is of the essence, and we cannot afford more stalling by the administration on this vital national security issue.

The general said the next 9 to 12 months are critical and that is why we need a decision now. I call on the Presi-

dent to heed his own words from this past weekend. Let's ignore the politics of the moment and finish the job in Afghanistan.

I recognize we have not yet seen any official numbers associated with General McChrystal's troop request, but I am very encouraged by the general's emphasis on putting more of an Afghan face on operations. I believe our ultimate success depends on our ability to hand responsibility for security over to Afghans.

I was also gratified to see the report's strong emphasis on the importance of "smart power" to achieving success. While the assessment does not actually use the term, the concept is woven into the core of the report. General McChrystal and others have been clear that traditional kinetic military efforts alone will not achieve the success we need. Success will be attainable only if we maximize the ability of nonmilitary agencies of the United States Government to work through Afghan institutions to achieve stability, reconstruction, and the rule of law.

As I have said repeatedly on the floor, the efforts by the National Guard, led by my own Missouri National Guard, to bring agricultural experts, including full-time farmers who also serve as trained military soldiers, who have gone into Nangarhar Province and in 1 year transformed the agriculture of Afghanistan so they could make a greater profit from raising legitimate crops and taking Afghanistan and Nangarhar Province from the No. 2 poppy-producing province in the nation down to almost zero poppy production. Six more National Guards from different States are there now. More are coming. Two weeks ago, I challenged all of the Nation's National Guard and their commanders at their meeting in Nashville to commit to send a National Guard unit from every State to an appropriate province where they can help, and they can make a difference. That is part of smart power. They need to bring the economic resources and the structures and the information and experience we have, protected by soldiers and airmen of the National Guard who can defend themselves and those they are protecting. That is smart power.

In the McChrystal report, the Afghan Defense Minister rejected the popular myth that Afghanistan is a graveyard of empires and we are destined to fail there. I couldn't agree more. As General McChrystal affirmed in his report: "While the situation is serious, success is still achievable." The Obama administration and Congress must each do its own part to give our troops the resources and time they need to make that success a reality.

Let's not snatch a defeat from the jaws of victory in Afghanistan just because a few pundits are pedaling political pessimism in Washington. All the experts, including General McChrystal, agree we need a properly resourced

counterinsurgency strategy, and we need it now. It is time to listen to our commanders on the ground, not the ever-changing political winds whispering defeat in Washington.

Madam President, I thank the Chair, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EASTERN EUROPE

Mr. VOINOVICH. Madam President, I rise to discuss America's relationship with our Eastern European friends as well as the challenges America faces in our relationship with Russia.

Over the last decade in the Senate, I have been a champion of NATO and worked diligently to increase membership in the alliance. I have also been active in improving our image in Eastern Europe through the expansion of the Visa Waiver Program at the request of our friends and allies in Eastern Europe. My passion for foreign relations stems in large part as a supporter of Ohio's diverse ethnic communities. As mayor of Cleveland and Governor of Ohio, I gained a keen understanding of Europe from my close work with constituents who had ties to countries that were once subject to life behind the Iron Curtain. This goes back to my first paper in undergraduate school and how the United States sold out Yugoslavia at Teheran and Yalta.

We did see the Berlin Wall fall and the Iron Curtain torn thanks in part to the efforts of Pope John Paul II, President Reagan, and President George H.W. Bush. But even with the end of the Cold War, I was deeply concerned that darker forces in Russia could once again reemerge as a threat to democracy, human rights, and religious freedom not just for the Russian people but for the newly freed "captive nations" of Eastern Europe.

I understood getting those nations into NATO could make the alliance more vibrant and healthy and give them safe harbor from the possible threat of Russian expansionism. One of my proudest moments in the Senate was being present at Prague in March of 2002 in the room when Lord Robertson announced that seven countries—Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia—were invited to join NATO.

When I was Governor of Ohio and chairman of the National Governors Association, I led an effort in 1998 to